

## REVIEW OF *PASOS VIVOS 1*

<b>Title:</b>	Pasos Vivos 1
<b>Distributor:</b>	Scott Foresman - Addison Wesley
<b>Contact information:</b>	1900 East Lake Avenue Glenview, IL 60025 Phone: (847) 729-3000; (800) 552-2259 (U.S.) Fax: (847) 729-8910 E-mail: <a href="mailto:sfawonline@aw.com">sfawonline@aw.com</a>
<b>Program information:</b>	<a href="http://www.scottforesman.com/sfaw/product/">http://www.scottforesman.com/sfaw/product/</a>
<b>System requirements:</b>	<b>Macintosh version</b> requires 68030 processor or better; System 7.0.1 or later; 640 by 480, 256 color monitor; minimum of 5 MB available RAM; 300-kbs, multimedia CD-ROM drive. <b>Windows version</b> requires 486 processor at 66MHz, running Windows 3.1 or better; 640 by 480, 256 color monitor; minimum of 8 MB available RAM (16 MB for Windows 95); 300-kbs, multimedia CD-ROM drive; Sound-Blaster compatible audio board and speakers.
<b>Price:</b>	Educational prices: \$49.95 for 1-9 units; \$39.95 for 10-99 units; \$29.95 for 100+ units. No site-licenses available. \$66.60 for an individual, non-academic unit.

Reviewed by Joseph Collentine, Northern Arizona University

### OVERVIEW

*Pasos Vivos 1* (PV1) is a CD-ROM accompanying *Paso a Paso* (Met, Sayers, & Eubanks Wargin, 1996), a high school, introductory Spanish series that promotes proficiency with a communicative approach. PV1 engages learners in task-based activities that would be beneficial to both high school and college level learners not acquainted with *Paso a Paso*. For each of its 14 modules, students play the role of an intern working at a "virtual" broadcast station. They must create multimedia presentations involving a particular content theme (e.g., pastimes, friends and relationships, foods, family, the home, the environment, etc.) that incorporate relevant vocabulary, grammatical structures, and cultural knowledge. "Interns" utilize a library of pictures, authentic digital movies, as well as self-generated texts and sound files to complete these tasks.

### DESCRIPTION

An understanding of the developmental benefits of tasks involving situated cognition helps one to fully appreciate what PV1 has to offer. According to Brown, Collins, and Duguid (1989), situated cognition occurs when students develop skills and acquire new knowledge while learning about the situations where those skills and that knowledge is useful. Thus, situated cognition involves students in a type of task-based learning. For instance, students might explore the use of vocabulary related to money while learning how to create an effective advertisement for a trip to Mexico. In the case of PV1, students work as interns at KPSO, a local broadcast station, where they do research on and produce multimedia presentations about various topics.

This software typifies the virtual worlds created with Macromedia's *Director*, where users interact with an application and hyperlink to new windows/documents by clicking real-world objects (e.g., a door to move

from one room to the next, a phone to listen to a message). PV1's first screen reveals the KPSO building. Students click the front door and see an elevator with 14 different buttons leading to different floors, each representing a different module (Figure 1).



Figure 1. KPSO's Elevator

For example, on the fourth floor interns find a sheet of paper on a desk; clicking it cues a pop-up window: "KPSO is producing a commercial highlighting the delicious, diverse foods of your community. Your assignment is to produce a rough draft of the commercial and promote interest in the community. Remember to investigate all of your resources." Next to the desk is a sign pointing to the *Biblioteca* (Library).



Figure 2. KPSO's Library

In the library (Figure 2), a photo album contains (unglossed) pictures of Hispanic dishes. A stereo cues a sound file with a traditional song about foods. A book of *Notas culturales* (Cultural Notes) next to the stereo opens a document containing information (in English) about Latin America's culinary contributions to the world. Finally, the library contains a slide projector which prompts a series of photos showing restaurant scenes and kitchens containing decipherable, authentic texts in the foreground or background (e.g., signs, newspapers, and menus).

Students can produce three types of presentations. From the library, they can access a Slide Presentation Maker (Figure 3) to craft a PowerPoint-like presentation with the aforementioned photos and student-generated voiceovers (using the operating system's built-in recording devices).



Figure 3. Slide Presentation Maker

Students may also utilize a Video Presentation Maker (Figure 4) to produce a film from the library's QuickTime movies. Students have the option of using a QuickTime movie and its original (authentic) dialogue or they may record a voiceover (e.g., using a video on open-air markets as a visual background for a commercial on foods).



Figure 4. Video Presentation Maker



Finally, students can create a word-processing document (using a built-in word processing program) that can insert the aforementioned clip-art.

Learners always have access to a Spanish-English/English-Spanish Dictionary (consisting of more than 1,900 entries) and a Help hyperlink. The help mechanism is not context sensitive, however. That is, Help does not, for instance, prompt a topic relevant to where the intern is in the building; instead, it prompts a generic list of topics and the user must determine which one contains the desired information.

How does a student present his or her final product? For the slide and video presentations, a button cues a full-screen presentation with the intern's visual media and any accompanying voiceovers. Users may print their word-processed documents.

Students can (in theory) archive a presentation's components by saving references to particular videos/photos and voiceover files to a floppy disk. Users may also store word-processing documents to a floppy. Multiple floppies are necessary if one's audio files total more than 1.2 megabytes (about 20 seconds--22 MHz sampling rate; 8 bit size). One cannot archive to a hard disk or the local network.

## **EVALUATION**

Educators such as Salaberry (1996) and Zhao (1996) have outlined the potential benefits of CALL tasks involving situated cognition. PV1 provides these conditions by establishing a virtual environment in which students can explore authentic materials (i.e., photos and digital videos), utilize Spanish purposefully in a production studio.

Nevertheless, just as a typical textbook today does not assume that all instructors will know how to effectively incorporate its features into a curriculum, PV1's designers would do well to provide a brief synopsis of the processes involved in, and the goals of, situated cognition. Alternatively, a sample multimedia presentation demonstrating what students could produce might make PV1's virtues more transparent. This might show the instructor that students could use their knowledge of Spanish to review authentic materials, write scripts, and record their own speech.

Additionally, PV1 is a 1997 publication, and so it is unacceptable that students cannot archive their work on a hard disk or local network. This limitation might discourage students who are willing to approach the production of their presentations recursively (i.e., not being satisfied with their product after the first draft). Finally, although not a particular problem of PV1, the 8-bit sampling size of audio and QuickTime files (which are numerous) greatly compromises the comprehensibility of the authentic speech samples.

## **SUMMARY**

Instructors should consider PV1 if they want to implement, or are willing to explore, the incorporation of task-based CALL programs in their curriculum. With an understanding of the developmental benefits of these sorts of activities, instructors can create classroom conditions where learners can utilize authentic Spanish materials as well as student-generated materials in meaningful, authentic tasks.

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## **ABOUT THE REVIEWER**

[Joseph Collentine](#) is an Assistant Professor of Spanish at Northern Arizona University. He has published on the acquisition of morphosyntactically complex structures by foreign language learners of Spanish and about CALL.

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